

# Module 1: Why Care About Health in the Workplace?

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## Handout C-1: Support Employee Health <sup>2 3 4</sup>

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South Central Community Head Start began a special wellness program in 1988, focusing on fitness, weight loss, and healthy eating. When the staff members started, only six exercised regularly, yet the entire staff calculated that collectively they were 2,155 pounds overweight. After two years of the program, 90% of the staff members were exercising at least three times per week and, with 100% of staff members participating in the wellness workshops, they had lost 375 pounds.

The Police Department in Northrhine-Westphalia, Germany, developed a stress-management program in 1983 to enable police officers to handle their daily duties more effectively by reducing stress and improving communication. Some officers got extensive training, then trained others. After four years, they claimed a drastic reduction in the use of guns (demonstrating improved coping skills) and fewer complaints by citizens at police stations.

New England Telephone banned smoking in all work areas, offering free on-site stop-smoking classes. Twenty months later, the company surveyed employees and found that 21% of respondents who smoked at the time of the ban had quit, a much greater impact than expected.

Rohm & Haas studied the relationship between participation in the company's physical fitness program and employee fitness. The researchers found that employees in the fitness program significantly improved in several health and fitness measures, including blood pressure, weight, endurance, and overall fitness.

Baltimore County School District instituted a wellness program for staff, featuring fitness rooms, health screenings, and walking teams. Teachers reported fewer colds and being better able to deal with stress on the job. Blood pressure and breast cancer screenings resulted in early detection of life-threatening illnesses.

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<sup>2</sup> National Resource Center on Worksite Health Promotion, *Promoting Health at Work*, (Washington, D.C.: 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Stephen M. Weiss, Jonathan E. Fielding, and Andrew Baum, eds., *Health at Work*, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> NEA Today, "Wellness at Work." (February 1992).

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